

**ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

<b>1. Meeting:</b>	<b>Deputy Leader</b>
<b>2. Date:</b>	<b>9 September 2013</b>
<b>3. Title:</b>	<b>Gov Delivery Communication System</b>
<b>4. Directorate:</b>	<b>EDS</b>

**5. Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to purchase the Gov Delivery system, which is a cloud based communication system that will enable the Council to provide co-ordinated email, SMS, social media and RSS feeds.

As well as enabling us to disseminate proactive updates and alerts to customers about the Council in a very effective and economical way, it would also enable us to distribute marketing information to increase take up of our services.

The system will allow the Council to collaborate with and share subscribers with other local authorities and government agencies, such as the Met Office and the Highways Agency. This collaboration helps to increase citizen take up rates and proactively encourages digital registration and take up of services. As such, it will help the Council's strategy towards achieving channel shift, where users interact with the Council through electronic interfaces.

The system will also enable us to consolidate currently fragmented email and mobile telephony contacts which are in place across the Council into the Gov Delivery system, allowing us to combine various databases of resident information which are currently in existence.

**6. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that:**

- **the contract for the purchase of the Gov Delivery Communication System be exempt from the provisions of standing order 47.6.3 (requirement to invite at least 3 written quotations for contracts with a value of between £20k and £50k) and the contract be awarded to Gov Delivery.**

## **7. Proposals and Details**

### **7.1 Background**

Rotherham Council has a wealth of information that, if shared, can make a difference in people's lives: for example severe weather alerts, school closures, missed bin collections, changes to services and marketing of events.

The Council currently has a wide range of digital distribution lists which are service specific and embedded into back office systems. In addition, the main corporate website has approximately 4,000 customers who have registered with the Council to be kept informed of service changes and news and events. However, bringing this information together in a joined up way is difficult at the moment as information is currently fragmented and managed by different areas within the Council.

Using our current systems it is rare that distribution lists are shared across services and it is rarer that cross promotion of services takes place. It is currently very complex to obtain approval and get information out to people using the wide variety of access channels which are available to our citizens (website, email, SMS, RSS feed, social media etc) in a proactive and joined up way.

Partly as a result of this, there has been limited focus on proactively marketing digital take up of services using digital methods. The Council could achieve significant savings by increasing channel shift towards electronic take up of services, but there is considerable improvement we could make in relation to the achievement of our channel shift strategy.

Rotherham Council would like to consolidate and centralise citizen contact details and communicate with customers by automating and coordinating messages through a single platform. We would like to automatically identify content which has been created or updated on our website or on our social media networks and be able to send proactive notices to targeted communities, thereby improving customer communication and saving the Council time and resources by reducing direct contact time with customers.

In addition, the Council would like to be able to generate increased revenue by increasing attendance at events through improved marketing and raising awareness of paid for services.

### **7.2 Gov Delivery**

Gov Delivery's digital communication management (DCM) platform is procured through the Governments G Cloud programme. It automatically identifies content which has been created or updated online and is able to filter information by key data such as post code, which can enable targeted communications to be made, such as letting customers on certain streets know that their bins have not been collected.

Citizens select the type of information that they want to receive, including topics from partnering organisations. This increases audience reach. Gov Delivery currently has more than 2 million subscribers and has typically penetrated 20% – 30% of area

households when implemented by local authorities. This helps to ensure that more traffic is generated to website and social media accounts and helps to encourage customers to use online services. Existing distribution lists can be imported into the system to enable cross promotion of services.

The system has a robust analytics module which will allow the council to better understand what communications citizens want and need, and offers advanced design and template editing, which supports the creation of sophisticated, professional looking email bulletins quickly, easily and cost-effectively. In addition, the Council can create templates which will ensure that the organisation's branding remains consistent, no matter who is communicating.

Central Government and more than 50 local authorities are using the Gov Delivery platform currently.

GovDelivery is the only supplier of this type of service currently available.

### **7.3 Marketing**

Subscription links and promotions to automated alerts must be actively promoted from social media and website content in order to encourage citizens to subscribe to bulletins and updates. It is therefore proposed that the Council's design studio develops an icon and strap-line which visually encourages customers to subscribe to the service. It is also proposed to develop and run a marketing plan to promote enhanced online access to Council Tax and Benefit services.

### **7.4 Benefits**

GovDelivery has a proven track record of gathering customer contact details extremely quickly and increase Councils' reputations of being proactive in updating customers quickly about anything including service changes, news and events. Other key benefits include:

- Increase usage of cheaper online channels (typically 35% more visitors to website and social media feeds)
- Increase number of online transactions (as high as 150% increase)
- Generate revenue by increasing attendance at events, marketing paid for services and attracting outside investment
- Reach more residents with timely, accurate service information (typically 20% of the adult population)
- Reduce avoidable telephone calls and face-to-face visits (typically 5% to 10%)
- Automate and coordinate multi-channel messages (email, SMS, RSS Twitter and Facebook) to residents without the need to provide additional resources to manage them
- Generate detailed demographic information on population to aid service delivery and drive improvements
- Collaborate and share subscribers with other Government agencies including Gov.UK Met Office, Department for Health, Highways Agency to boost sign-up rates (often 50%+)

## **8. Finance**

Gov Delivery has a published G-Cloud pricing of £1,932 per month. This provides a full enterprise license and unlimited usage of the system. It is proposed that the ICT Contracts revenue budget is used to fund the system.

Uptake will be monitored and it is anticipated this service will contribute to the achievement of the Council's aims relating to channel shift (ie reducing phone calls and face to face contacts) and associated savings.

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties**

Rotherham Council wishes to encourage greater citizen take up of services which can be accessed digitally. In order to encourage this, the Council must ensure that we have a proactive and frequent digital marketing campaign and co-ordinated approach to providing information which is of interest to our citizens. Our current systems are fragmented and resource heavy.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications**

This will support the delivery of the Council's Customer Access Strategy and ICT Strategy.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation**

- RMBC ICT Strategy (2011 to 2015)
- RMBC Customer Access Strategy (2011 to 2015)
- RMBC Online Services Manager
- RMBC Comms and Marketing Manager
- Head of ICT, RMBC

## **12. Contact Names:**

Rachel O'Neil  
Customer Access Service Manager, Customer and Cultural Services  
[rachel.oneil@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.oneil@rotherham.gov.uk)

Richard Copley  
Corporate IT Manager, Audit & Asset Management  
[richard.copley@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:richard.copley@rotherham.gov.uk)